



C.M.S. NEWS-LETTER

Dear fellow-Member of C.M.S.,

This NEWS-LETTER aims to introduce you to one of the world's best-known and least-known frontiers—the frontier which runs from Baluchistan to Kashmir; on the one side Pakistan, on the other Afghanistan. Across this frontier from the dawn of history armies have marched and counter-marched. It is a frontier which has never been a barrier, and yet the peoples who live in its formidable mountains have never been conquered by any imperial power. The legions have numbered past. They have not stopped.

As you go up the Khyber you can see carved on the rocks the regimental lists of countless units of the British and of the old Indian Army, which were fought in the Pass during the last 200 years. Peshawar, standing in its mountain-circled plain, must be one of the most sought after and fought over towns in the world—the guardian city here for 2,500 years, at least, East and West have met in struggle and embrace. It is of this border-line that Kipling wrote his almost invariably misquoted ballad whose opening words are:

"Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,"

and there, for the ignorant or the wilfully perverse, the quotation is allowed to stop, forgetful that Kipling, who believed passionately, though not sentimentally, in the meeting of East and West, went on to write:

But there is neither East nor West,
Border, nor Breed, nor Birth
When two strong men stand face to face,
Though they come from the ends of the earth."

Yet this land, for all its romantic glory, is still but little known, its peoples and their problems little understood, its role in the unfolding task of the Christian world largely unconsidered. The Pathans, the people of the border land, have yielded more Christian martyrs than there are today Christian Pathans. What does that add up to in our dividend-obsessed Churches of the West?

THE LAND OF THE PATHANS

Before we ask about the Pathans a word should be inserted about the

FRONTIER STORY

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geography of the land. The home country of the Pathans is the great range of mountains which form the eastern edge of the upland mass, which in a real sense makes of Asia from the Tigris to the Indus one country. Sir Olaf Caroe in his history, *The Pathans 550 B.C.-A.D. 1957*, writes:

"No one who enters, say, Peshawar or Bannu from the Punjab or mounts the hills west of them, can fail to remark that he has left one region of the world for another, and he is on the verge of the Iranian plateau. To him the mountains are different, the plants burgeon, the seasons revolve, the willow, the plane, the cypress appear, the rivers flow bright and gay as if alive, the birds recall the west, the sun and wind have an uplifting keenness—the men are the men of Central Asia, not of the sub-continent he has left behind." (p. 26)

If you would see this geographical unity illuminated by history read Professor Ghirshman's *Iran*.

Sir Olaf has a fine passage in his Introduction which will serve to lead us to the question, "Who are the Pathans?" He writes:

"The persistence of the Pathan tribal tradition has produced a society at all levels, starting from the nomad and herdsman, through the articulated tribe and the sponsors of an Asian dynastic principle, to the modern lawyer, engineer, doctor, administrator and politician. Standing over against the tribal village and the tents of the caravan are men for a century imbued with Western thought and now reaching forward to that synthesis of values which Pakistan strives to attain. All these stages of social and political development can be seen today, side by side and superimposed one on another, by anyone who cares to move in a twenty-mile radius around Peshawar. . . . We have here what John Morley called a congeries of peoples engaged in a long march through the centuries from the fifth

to the twentieth. To be in a position to observe all this . . . is a vastly exciting experience.

"It is part of the magic of the frontier." (p. xxii)

I had that vastly exciting experience myself for a few days last January. I also succumbed to the magic of the frontier, which is one reason why I am writing this NEWS-LETTER.

WHO ARE THE PATHANS?

Who then are the Pathans? Who are these fascinating people who provided contingents for the army of Xerxes and fought at Thermopylae: who, after Alexander had destroyed the main army of Darius at the decisive battle of Arbela, fought on through the night when others had fled: who once established a dynasty on the throne of Delhi: who have never been conquered, and some of whose tribes to this day have never paid tribute to any man? Not for me the rash endeavour to answer a question over which the experts disagree! The curious will find the matter exhaustively discussed and argued in Sir Olaf Caroe's magnificent volume. But perhaps the past, from which the Pathans have emerged, can best be described in the words of a Pathan poet and writer of today, Khan Abdul Ghani Khan. In his delightful *The Pathans—a Sketch* the author says:

"Racially he is clearly Greek, crossed with something. What that something was I do not know. Nor would I worry about it any further. What he was five thousand years ago does not matter.

"It is also obvious that he was a Buddhist before he became a Muslim, and that he was a Hindu before he became a Buddhist. I do not know what kind of a Buddhist he was in spite of the thousands of images of Buddha that he made. . . . He is too independent to make the ideal follower of any prophet, so probably he was a good sculptor and a poor Buddhist. . . . He is perhaps a mixture of every race that came to India from the heart of Asia—the Persian, the Greek, the Mongol and the Turk.

"Each race has contributed something to his virtues and vices, looks and beliefs, religion and love-songs. His temperament, like his clothes, is picturesque and elegant. He loves fighting but hates to be a soldier. He loves music but has a great contempt for the musician. He is kind and gentle but hates to show it. He has strange principles and peculiar notions. He is hot-blooded and hot-headed and poor and proud. If that is what you call a Jew, then he is certainly a Jew, nose and all.

"The best course would be to forget how it all started and look upon what he really is today. Neither a Jew nor a Greek, but a

temperamental neighbour who may become a loving friend, or a deadly enemy. He knows no happy medium; that is his greatest virtue and his greatest drawback. This most intriguing little book with vivid writing, its stories and folk songs, its records of customs and a way of life, was written to introduce the Pathans to the other peoples of Pakistan. It deserves to be enjoyed by a wider world. Khan Abdul Ghani Khan sums up this tribute of affection for his people in words which will move anybody who, however intimately or slightly, has felt the magic of the frontier:

"But the chief reason why I love him is because he will wash his face and oil his beard and perfume his locks and put on his best pair of clothes when he goes out to fight and die. The dear child wants to be like him. He thinks God dislikes a dirty face as much as he dislikes himself; so he washes it."

THE FAITH OF THE PATHANS

Once a Hindu, then a Buddhist, then a Muslim, sometimes of the Shiahs but most often a Sunni, what, may we ask, are the inner springs that move the Pathan? Both Sir Olaf Caroe and Khan Abdul Ghani Khan point to an intriguing fact that he lives at the deepest level of the *Pakhtunwali*, the Pathan code. This is the real pattern of his life, it is older than Islam, and when the principles of the code conflict with the principles of Islam the Pathan abides by the code. Khan Abdul Ghani Khan believes that the true sources of the code can be traced to Sparta, that it is a legacy from the Greeks, whose influence on the frontier far outlasted the brief incursions of Alexander. Read Ghirshman's book if you would appreciate the penetrating impact of Hellas upon all Western Asia up to the Indus.

This, of course, is not said to quash the devotion of the Pathans to Islam, only to indicate something distinctive about that devotion, a quality of the incalculable which should demand attention from the Christian who seeks to understand the Pathans, and to serve them in the light of another code whose inspiration is a Prophet honoured by Islam as yet tragically misunderstood by Muslims. He whom they honour with imperfect understanding we would humbly proclaim.

THE WATCHERS BY THE THRESHOLD

The proclamation began on the frontier in the early fifties of the last century, the first to tell of Christ to the Colonel of a British regiment

himself preached in the Peshawar bazaar. A Persian from Tehran was the first to be baptized as a result of this proclamation. The second 'confessor' was an Afghan from Kandahar. Slowly, very slowly, the Church grew, drawing its main membership from the peoples of the Punjab who, whether as traders or camp-followers, had settled in the frontier towns. The Pathan was not susceptible. Ever a jealous guardian of his own independence, Christianity, if he contemplated it at all, wore a foreign guise, was in any case the professed creed of those who most obviously threatened his independence.

But the proclamation continued none the less, its chief instruments being first the Christian schools, then the Christian hospitals, and latterly Edwardes College, Peshawar. To this College with its fine Christian tradition Sir Olaf pays tribute, seeing it as having played a very significant part in the awakening of the Pathans to the part they could play in the development of the sub-continent. On a smaller scale Edwardes College has done for the Pathan awakening what the American University at Beirut did for the Arab awakening. The long-term consequences of these two awakenings are still beyond our seeing.

In a different way, but maybe as far-reaching, has been the impact of the Christian hospitals. Strung along the frontier, at the entrance of each of the main passes, they have consistently borne witness to the compassionate love of Christ. I have before me, as I write, an extract from a hitherto unpublished letter written by one of our C.M.S. missionaries, the Rev. David Brodie:

"When I came out as a missionary from C.M.S. in 1866," he wrote, "there was no medical mission work on the whole of the N.W. Frontier. . . .

"In those days Queen Victoria gave a money prize to any Army officer who passed an examination in one of the Indian languages. One day an officer came to see me and handed over a sum of money he had obtained in this way with the remark, 'Here you are, Brodie, take this and put it in the bank. One day you will want it to start a medical mission here.' No land on which to build a hospital was then obtainable so the money was duly banked. Time passed and then one day I received an urgent message from a chieftain whose wife was seriously ill asking if I would go and do what I could for her. I set off at once on horseback accompanied by an Army doctor. We both prayed earnestly as we rode that we might be guided as to how best we could help. Our prayers were answered: the woman's life was saved. The chieftain, full of gratitude, said 'Anything you like to ask'.

My reply was prompt and clear, 'Land for a hospital'. The money was in the bank; the land was now forthcoming, and the way was opened for the first Medical Mission Hospital on the N.W. Frontier to be started."

That is the story of the origin of the Christian Hospital at Bannu. My wife and I will not soon forget the visit we paid that hospital in January, or the road back to Peshawar when our driver was the Pakistani Superintendent of that hospital, himself the son of an Afghan who coming to Dr. Pennell, at that same hospital, found Christ so obviously present in that missionary that he too became a disciple. On that road back to Peshawar we had to stop again and again, as patients had gathered at the roadside in the hope of receiving the doctor's help. So it is up and down the frontier. Christ is proclaimed by deeds as well as words.

At Peshawar one early morning I saw the secret of the influence of these hospitals. There were 35 men and women gathered in the hospital Chapel to ask God's blessing before the work of the day began. The service was in Urdu. A few minutes later I heard the story of the healing of Peter's wife's mother told in Pushtu in one of the wards. No-one is left in any doubt that the hospital is "in the Name of Jesus Christ".

In my diary, summing up these few days on the frontier, I wrote:

"The number of converts to Christianity is at the moment negligible. But I have come away from the Frontier completely impatient with the argument that we are not sent to 'influence' people but to 'convert' them. That is to pose a contradiction which is non-existent. Of course if you are content with influence then that is not good enough. Indeed to be content with influence is a sure way to lose it. But the Christian workers on the Frontier are not content with influence. They are wanting commitment. But they refuse to despise influence.

"A way of life, an ethic, is being more and more widely recognised as the true way. And everyone knows that it stems from Jesus Christ. . . . Men who have not yet been willing to confess Jesus Christ as Lord are nevertheless seeking to live in this way and they know that only He can help them."

Missionaries, doctors, nurses, educationists, ordained men, are wanted on this frontier. The Pathan 'awakening' may yet prove an awakening to the presence of Christ in their midst. Sir Olaf Caroe, in describing certain personalities of the frontier, has unwittingly described the kind of man and woman a missionary there should be. Of one such he wrote:

"He cared and worked for the Pathans, and he understood their every mood. A very fluent speaker of their language, he could turn a proverb, point a moral, quote a poet, make a domestic allusion in perfect timing and in communion with those who heard him."

Of another he testified that—

"He had in him the root of the matter; he was always available, and he did not falter".

I close with some lines from the most famous of all Pathan poets, Kushal Khan, who wrote in the 17th century:

"Here am I, my God, I wait at Thy threshold!

One day will be heard the command, 'Come thou to Me',

Then eagerly will Thy slave run to Thee,
Though Thou dost rend the petitions I send
Thee,

In words will I assail Thee in my prayers."

The purpose of the Christian Mission on the frontier is so to reveal Christ to those who wait at the threshold may hear the command 'Come'.

Your sincere friend,

Max Warran

General Secretary

If undelivered please return to

6 Salisbury Square, London, E.C.4

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

†*The Pathans*—550 B.C.-A.D. 1957, by Olaf Caroe (Macmillan & Co., 1958). 60s. At present out of print but available in any good Library.

†*The Pathans—a Sketch*, by Ghani Khan (University Book Agency, Peshawar, Pakistan 1958). 3 Rupees.

Iran—from the earliest times to the Islamic Conquest, by R. Ghirshman (A Pelican Book A.239. 1954). Out of print.

*†*Frontier Doctor*, by Sir Henry Holland (Hodder & Stoughton, 1958). 25s., by post 26s. The engaging autobiography of an 'honorary Pathan' and one of our "great contemporaries".

†*No Second Spring?—a Study of a Frontier Operation*, by H. B. T. Holland (Highway Press 1953). Out of print. An admirable short account of the Frontier and a Christian witness there.

†*International Affairs*, April 1961, Vol. 37, No. 2, contains a very interesting and relevant article by Professor Arnold Toynbee entitled "Impressions of Afghanistan and Pakistan's North-West Frontier in relation to the Communist world".

*May be ordered from the C.M.S. Publishing Dept.

†May be borrowed from the C.M.S. Library.

‡Should be ordered direct.